

Coastal Steward Class Pledge

Information and Background for Teachers or Pledge Leaders

- 1. Learn about the problem of marine debris. Talk to classmates, friends, and family about marine debris and why it's a serious problem.**

Visit www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/marinedebris.html for more information. Marine debris is trash in the ocean (or on its way there). People create marine debris in a variety of ways, including littering, improper disposal, accidents, or carelessness. Marine debris is bad because it's ugly, it can damage ships, injure people, harm or kill animals through entanglement or ingestion, and much more. There are several videos on the topic in the Coastal Commission's free video lending library. Visit www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/directory/educate.html for details.

- 2. Take a field trip to a local beach, river, or creek and clean up any trash that you see. (Consider taking part in the Adopt-A-Beach Program or the annual Coastal Cleanup Day.) If you keep track of the trash that you collect using a datacard, please send a copy of the information to the Coastal Commission. If you notice a particular problem at your site, like overflowing or inadequate trashcans, write a letter to or call the responsible agency (e.g. California State Parks, your city's Parks and Recreation or Public Works Department, etc.).**

Coastal Cleanup Day takes place throughout the world on the third Saturday every September, with about 50,000 Californians participating in our state. Adopt-A-Beach is a year-round program that allows you to organize your own cleanup and provides you with help selecting a site, getting supplies, and arranging for trash pickup. For information, visit www.coastforyou.org or call (800) Coast4U. You can download a beach cleanup lesson, which includes cleanup datacards, here: www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/waves/waves_9.pdf. The activity is in Chapter 9 of our science activity guide for teachers, *Waves, Wetlands and Watersheds* (read more about it at www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/waves/waves1.html).

- 3. "Adopt" your schoolyard or the street in front of your school. Once a week, visit your adopted site and pick up any trash that you see. Recycle or compost whatever you can and place the rest in the garbage. While cleaning up your site, explain to other students or interested passers-by why it's important to keep this trash out of the environment.**

Trash on the street can end up in our waterways and eventually the ocean. The trash can blow into nearby creeks that feed into the bay or ocean, or they can enter storm drains. Storm drains in street gutters usually do not lead to a water treatment plant. Instead, they flow directly to the nearest creek, river, or beach. Everything that flows into a storm drain may end up on the beach, so only rain should go down a storm drain. Not everyone knows this, so help educate people about the importance of keeping our neighborhoods clean, and of never pouring anything (such as paint or motor oil) onto the street or down a storm drain.

- 4. Start a "waste-free" lunch program at your school.**

Creating less waste in the first place means there will be less marine debris. Learn how to create less waste when bringing lunch to school. Instead of throwaway packaging like individual yogurt containers, snack packages, juice boxes, and paper bags, pack lunches in reusable containers such as jars, thermoses, and sturdy lunch boxes and bags. Visit www.wastefreelunches.org for more ideas. You might want to create a handout to send home to parents with ideas on how they can easily create less trash while saving money on expensive single-serving items.

- 5. Challenge another class to a trashless lunch challenge. Set a date to create as little lunch trash as possible by bringing food in reusable containers and composting any food waste. The class that creates the least trash wins. Afterwards, try to continue your trashless lunch efforts.**

A competition is a great way to really get into the effort of creating less trash. It can also be a way to share what you know with another class. Maybe you could engage the whole school in an effort to waste less at lunchtime.

- 6. Use the backsides of paper for scratch paper, for printing drafts, and for anything that doesn't need to look "perfect". Keep a box of flat, ready to use scratch paper, where people can place their one-sided paper and grab a sheet to use.**
- 7. Keep classroom recycling bins for paper (that can't be used as scratch paper) and for bottles if necessary. Make sure the contents of the bins are actually recycled.**
- 8. Start a worm compost bin for your classroom. For information, visit www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Vermi/.**

Again, creating less waste in the first place means less marine debris in the long run. The slogan "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" is in order of the greatest impact. Reduce waste all that you can, reuse everything possible, recycle what you can't reuse. When this philosophy is second nature to everyone, we'll be on our way to protecting our oceans and the rest of our environment.

- 9. Check for leaks in faucets or drinking fountains in your classroom. If they leak, contact your school custodian and request that the leaky faucet be fixed.**

- 10. Do a regular water use patrol of your school's bathrooms to check for leaky faucets and running toilets. Inform school authorities of any problems and follow up to see that they are fixed. If students leave faucets running in the bathrooms, consider placing signs near the sinks reminding people to turn off faucets when they're not using them. Get permission from school administrators first.**

Conserving water is important for a healthy coast and ocean. If your drinking water comes from a river, using water reduces the flow of that river. The less water coming down the river to the ocean, the less healthy that river environment may be for fish and other animals that travel between the salty ocean and the freshwater river inland. Less river flow may mean less sand traveling down the river to your favorite beach. Also, when water goes down the drain it has to be cleaned at a water treatment plant. This cleaning uses up energy. Once the water has been cleaned, the waste that's been removed must be disposed of and the clean water must be "discharged", often into the bay or ocean. This discharge can change the salinity of the body of water it's emptied into, which may alter the habitat of the plants and animals that live there.

- 11. If your school plans an outdoor celebration, discourage the organizers from releasing balloons as part of the festivities. Balloons become marine debris, endangering animals that may mistake them for food.**

What goes up must come down, and that adage is true of balloons. They may look pretty floating off into the sky, but the harm they cause to animals is NOT worth it. Like other marine debris, balloons may be mistaken for food by animals, who can then choke or perceive a false sense of fullness from a stomach full of trash. Eating marine debris can seriously harm or kill animals. Encourage your school or community to discover another way to celebrate the culmination of an event, such as singing a song or planting a tree or native wildflowers.

- 12. Write a letter (individually or as a class) to the editor of your local newspaper or to an elected official. Write about an important coastal issue and describe any actions you think should be taken.**

Policy makers respond to public demand. If you've researched an issue and want to share what you've learned, or if you want to recommend specific action on a problem, tell your elected officials. Writing to the editor helps you spread the word to other members of the public, as well as the people in power (who do read those letters!). It may also inspire the newspaper to publish an article on the issue. You can also write to specific businesses to let them know if you think they're doing a good job or if you think they could do better with regard to a coastal issue. For tips on writing effective letters, see Appendix D of *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds* at www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/waves/waves_appendices.pdf

- 13. Learn about overfishing and sustainable seafood and share your knowledge with friends and family. Visit www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp for more information and to download the Seafood Watch Pocket Guide. You can also contact the Coastal Commission for copies of the guide.**

Due to overfishing and environmental factors, some species of fish are in trouble. You can choose to help instead of harm these species by only purchasing and eating fish that are harvested sustainably. A sustainable fishery is one that, in the long-term, does not endanger the ecosystem. The Seafood Watch guide tells you which species are sustainable and which are not. Sharing this information with those who buy or cook seafood, like parents, cafeterias, restaurants, and markets, will make a difference for the health of our oceans. If your class is in middle or high school, you may want to consider borrowing the video *Empty Oceans, Empty Nets* from the Coastal Commission's free lending library. Visit www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/directory/educate.html for details.

- 14. Encourage your family and friends to take the Coastal Stewardship Pledge at www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/steward/pledge_form.html (or call 800-Coast4u to request a printed version). There are many actions you can take outside of school to help protect our coast and ocean.**

The more people who take action for our coast and ocean, the bigger the difference we can make! Encourage everyone to take the Pledge!

What else can your school do?

There are many more things your classroom or school can do to care for our coast and the rest of our environment. Here are just a few ideas:

- Do a campus environmental audit to analyze resource use and waste generation at your school. The California Integrated Waste Management Board has a free campus audit manual that was developed for a sixth grade level, but which can be used for other grades as well. It is located at www.ciwm.ca.gov/Publications/default.asp?pubid=1140
- Encourage your school to develop a waste-free policy for all school functions, such as PTA meetings, sports events, and school carnivals. Reduce or eliminate the use of disposable items, especially those made of plastic, in favor of reusables. In the process, educate students and families on the reasons for your efforts.
- Fifth grade classes can take the Jiminy Cricket Environmental Challenge, sponsored by Disney and the California Interagency Environmental Education Network. Classes develop and carry out a service-learning project and then create a report on their work. One class will win a trip to Disneyland. Visit www.disney.go.com/environmentality/jcec for information.
- Your school can "go green" by reducing waste with the Go Green Initiative. Visit www.gogreeninitiative.org for information.
- Get your students involved in habitat restoration efforts. To find out what's going on in your area, you can check the Coastal Commission's Marine, Coastal, & Watershed Resource Directory at www.coastforyou.org, or contact your parks department or local environmental organizations. Restoration projects are often looking for student volunteers.